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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE; NEA/IPA FOR GOLDBERGER, SHAMPAINE,
BELGRADE; NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/PASCUAL; TREASURY FOR
HIRSON; BRUSSELS FOR LERNER

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SUBJECT: HAMAS REJECTS COOPERATION WITH PALESTINIAN
AUTHORITY ON GAZA CROSSINGS

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (SBU) Mohammed Al Madhoun, Hamas spokesman and aide to Hamas leader Ismael Haniyah, said on December 25 that Hamas "will not coordinate with the Palestinian government in Ramallah regarding the opening of the Gaza crossings." Quoted by Al Ayyam, Madhoun said "any initiative to open (the crossings) without Hamas participation is rejected." Madhoun was responding to reports that the Palestinian Authority (PA) is developing plans to manage the crossings if Israel agrees to lift Gaza border closures.

¶2. (C) Hatem Yousef, head of the PA's Customs and Excise Directorate, told EconOff on December 26 that the Gaza crossings management plan will be presented to PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad December 30. Yousef, whose department is primarily responsible for drafting the plan, said he is disregarding Hamas' statements. The plan, said Yousef, will "present all possible scenarios and options so that PM Fayyad can make his decision." It will address such issues as security concerns, personnel needs, international assistance offers, and coordination with Israeli officials, he said. He declined to go into further detail pending finalization and presentation of the plan.

¶3. (C) Abdel Hafiz Nofal, a Deputy Minister of National Economy who sits on the Palestinian Border Management Steering Committee, told us that the PA "does not want Hamas to be part of any of the border arrangements." Nofal suggested that PA personnel could be present at the Israeli side of the Gaza crossings and "any trusted body," such as a private company or international organization, could operate the Gaza side.

WALLES